

Section 4

Initial Accreditation Policies

This section governs the initial accreditation of institutions and programs.

A. Responsibility for Two Types of Initial Accreditation

1. **Initial Accreditation of Institutions/*Program Sponsors*.** A postsecondary education institution that has not previously been declared eligible to offer credential preparation programs must submit an application to the Commission for initial professional accreditation. Institutional accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) *or another of the six regional accrediting bodies or evidence of the entity's governance board's approval or sponsorship of the program* is required for initial professional accreditation by the Commission. The Commission may establish additional procedures and criteria for the initial professional accreditation of institutions to prepare and recommend candidates for state credentials in education.
2. **Initial Accreditation of Programs.** New credential program proposals by institutions that have been determined to be eligible by the Commission must fulfill preconditions established by state law and the Commission, the Common Standards, and a set of Program Standards. Descriptions of new programs include evidence of involvement in program design and planning by elementary and secondary school practitioners and members of diverse local communities. The Committee on Accreditation approves the initial accreditation of new credential programs of an eligible institution/*sponsor*.

B. Policies for Initial Accreditation of Programs

1. **Review of New Programs.** Prior to being presented to the Committee for action, new programs proposed by eligible program sponsors are reviewed in relation to the Common Standards and the selected Program Standards as specified in Section 3 of this *Framework*. The Committee considers recommendations by the staff and the external reviewers regarding the accreditation for each proposed program.

2. **Professional Program Standards.** An institution/*program sponsor* that selects National or Professional Program Standards (Option 2) or *utilizes* Alternate Program Standards (Option 3) submits the standards to the Committee on Accreditation for initial approval prior to developing a program proposal. The acceptability of the standards is assured before the *sponsor* prepares a program proposal.

3. **Alternate Standards**

a) **Experimental Programs.** The Committee on Accreditation accredits experimental programs by applying standards adopted by the Commission relating to:

- submission of research questions, hypotheses or objectives related to the selection, preparation or assessment of prospective professional educators;
- submission of a research design applicable to the research questions, hypotheses or objectives being investigated; and
- demonstration of the potential effectiveness of the proposed program in generally improving the quality of service authorized by the credential.

b) **Alternative Programs.** The Committee on Accreditation accredits alternative programs by applying standards adopted by the Commission relating to the overall quality of alternative standards developed by the institution, which must have educational merit generally equivalent or superior to standards set by the Commission as Option 1.